DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 084 465 CG 008 460

AUTHOR Diamond, Michael Jay; Shapiro, Jerrold Lee
TITLE Toward the Long-Term Scientific Study of Encounter Group Phenomena: I. Methodological Considerations.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Western Psychological Association Meeting (53rd. Anaheim, California, April, 1973)
AVAILABLE FROM Michael Jay Diamond, Department of Psychology, University of Hawaii, 2430 Campus Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Group Behavior; Group Dynamics; Group Experience; Group Relations; *Research Criteria; *Research Methodology; *Sensitivity Training; *T Groups

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a model for the long-term scientific study of encounter, T-, and sensitivity groups. The authors see the need for overcoming major methodological and design inadequacies of such research. They discuss major methodological flaws in group outcome research as including: (1) lack of adequate base rate or pretraining measures; (2) failure to include a matched control group; (3) lack of truly independent observers; (4) failure to control adequately for test reactivity and obtrusive observer effects; (5) failure to employ dependent measures consistent with the group goals; and (6) failure to include followup. The authors attempt to avoid these pitfalls in the model experimental paradigm which they present. The model includes: (1) determination and specification of group goals; (2) screening of group members; (3) pre-testing; (4) experimental treatment; (5) post-testing; (6) followup testing; (7) long-term followup testing; and (8) an analysis of data. (WSK)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 084465

TOWARD THE LONG-TERM SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF ENCOUNTER GROUP PHENOMENA: I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Michael Jay Diamond Jerrold Lee Shapiro

University of Hawaii

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG 008 460

Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Anaheim, California, April, 1973.

TOWARD THE LONG-TERM SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF ENCOUNTER GROUP PHENOMENA: I. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS[1]

Michael Jay Diamond Jerrold Lee Shapiro

University of Hawaii

Despite the plethora of research on encounter, T-, and sensitivity groups in the past twenty-five years, major methodological and design inadequacies have generally not been overcome. The vast majority of studies have been all too easily satisfied with "Your group made a new man of me, Doc!" or "What happened to me was just too beautiful to describe" data of the testimonial variety. Other investigators have noted numerous methodological flaws in this group research (Campbell & Dunnette, 1968; Cooper, 1969; Gibb, 1971; Harrison, 1967; House, 1967; Stock, 1964). The present paper is concerned with resolving these difficulties and, in addition, highlighting some issues that have not been sufficiently considered previously. Our aim is to encourage heightened awareness of these problems and concomitantly provide an impetus toward overcoming those methodological barriers that might be circumvented by the creative use of our research tools.

One major problem, adequate specification of the independent variable (i.e., the nature of the group experience), has been neglected by the researchers and most methodological critics. Although labels like encounter, sensitivity, and T-group are applied to differentiate groups, there is limited consensus as to the relationship between the label and the process and the

content of the group experience. Thus, for some authors, a "sensitivity group" consists of a wide variety of body awareness exercises and communion-oriented activities, while for others, a "sensitivity group" is limited to verbal interaction oriented toward the understanding of group communication (Gottschalck & Davidson, 1971). Confusion also exists as to the intra- versus interpersonal orientation within the group (Lakin, 1972; Shapiro & Diamond, 1972), the activity-passivity of the leader, the amount of structured experience, the emphasis upon the application of the group learning to the back-home environment, the temporal (e.g., short-term versus long-term; spaced versus massed) and spatial arrangements of the group; and finally, the member composition of the group (e.g., embedded versus open; horizontal versus vertical; homogeneity versus heterogeneity). In view of the multitude of critical parameters then, the use of generic terms like "sensitivity", "encounter-", and "T-group" are inadequate as defining operations. At this stage, it becomes most important for researchers and theoreticians to isolate and specify exactly what goes on in their groups at least in terms of the above dimensions.

Additional major methodological flaws in group outcome research include: (1) a lack of adequate base rate or pretraining measures; (2) a failure to include a matched-control group; (3) a lack of truly independent observers; (4) a failure to adequately control for test reactivity and obtrusive observer effects; (5) a failure to employ dependent measures consistent with the group goals; and finally, (6) with few exceptions, the failure to include follow-up as well as transfer of training (i.e., generalization) testing. Similar methodological problems in group process research also are pertinent but beyond the purview of this paper.

In a series of studies over the last three and one-half years in our laboratories at the Pacific Center for Experiential Group Research, University of Hawaii, attempts have been made to carry out systematic and methodologically sound research on encounter group outcome. In these investigations (see Shapiro & Diamond, 1973, to be discussed subsequently), pretraining measures have been uniformly administered to both experimental and matched-control groups. Furthermore, post-training measures and follow-up data have also been regularly obtained. Both independent and unobtrusive observers as well as nonreactive dependent measures have been employed. In addition, behavioral measures and generalization tests, as well as multi-method data collection procedures with respect to group goals, have been used. Finally, attempts have been made to more clearly specify the independent variable (i.e., type of group) in terms of content as well as leader, member, set, and setting parameters.

The remainder of this paper will focus on a model experimental paradigm designed to avoid many of the methodological pitfalls described above. We fully recognize that logistical, ethical, economic, and practical considerations will make this model an "ideal" goal worth striving for rather than the necessary and sufficient conditions for all encounter group research. Nevertheless, just as with group learning itself, we feel that a more adequate specification of goals is conducive to the attainment of such ends.

An outline of this experimental model is presented in Table 1.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
Insert Table 1 about here
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Eight steps are emphasized. In Step 1, group goals are determined and specified in operational terms and appropriate control and/or comparison

groups instigated. For example, agency goals such as increased performance on the job as opposed to communion or personal growth goals like increased openness to experience are specified. Performance might be operationalized in terms of product output and matched-control groups would include a waiting-list (no training) condition and an attention-placebo (e.g., product-oriented discussion) comparison group.

Step 2 would include the screening of members to insure against casualties (e.g., Reddy, 1972) and to assure voluntary and informed participation. Thus individuals in crises situations, hysterics, schizoids, and psychopaths, individuals undergoing psychotherapy or holding goals that are incongruent to the specific group goals, and "institutionalized groupies" are screened out.[2] Expectancies are equated across all subjects.

Step 3 is the pre-testing phase. Biographical and subjective expectational scales, standardized self-report tests, unobtrusive behavioral and psychophysiological measures, independent observer's reports, and independent observer self-reports are administered. Thus, data is obtained on the following four modalities of human experience: (1) self- and other perception; (2) arousal level; (3) cognitive structuring; and (4) behavioral expression. In addition, data is collected from the group members themselves, significant others, and independent observers. Finally, relevant measures are also obtained on the leaders.

Experimental treatment occurs in Step 4. Accordingly, the treatment and placebo-attention groups run their course in identical settings. During this time, process measures are recorded. Thus, developmental measures of empathy, congruence, cohesion, and interpersonal facility, etc., are recorded to be related to outcome dependent measures.

Step 5, the post-testing phase, immediately follows the conclusion of Step 4 and is identical to the pre-testing phase (Step 3) with the exception that subjects' subjective perceptions of their group experiences in the form of diaries, journals, and/or interviews are elicited. Additionally, an assessment of experimental demand characteristics is made by means of an interview in order to partial out compliance and/or negativity effects from group learning effects. Carefully worded questions should be made with well-stated demands for honesty (cf. Bowers, 1967).

Step 6 involves re-testing at a 3-6 month interval following the conclusion of the post-testing phase. The procedure is identical to the post-testing phase. This testing is particularly sensitive to any hybernation effects or any sharp learning decrements.

Step 7 involves a long term follow-up testing administration 1-3 years following the conclusion of the post-testing phase in order to determine more permanent learning effects. The procedure is again identical to the post-testin phase.

Finally, in Step 8 data are analyzed with respect to discovering the optimal treatment and this treatment is then offered to waiting-list group subjects.[3] The data matrix is also extensively examined with respect to the effects of pretest personality variables of members and leaders as well as member expectancies, and co-variations between measures are analyzed in order to contribute to replication and extension studies. In particular, an attempt is made to examine the data in a more idiographic manner in order to assess differences between those who benefit, don't change, or are hindered by the treatment. Future groups can then be formed with respect to the interactions between individual differences and the situational and treatment variables.

The foregoing experimental model is necessarily an outgrowth and impetus for an empirically-based theory of encounter group learning and behavior change. The content, value, and implications of such a theory is emerging in the recent works of the authors (Diamond, 1972; Diamond & Shapiro, 1973). It is our goal to more clearly specify the relations between group learning experiences and outcomes and thus provide researchers and group leaders alike with the additional heuristic and applied tools so dearly needed at this time.

Table 1

A Model for Encounter Group Research

	Experimental Groups$_{1-N}$	Attention Placebo Control	Waiting List Control
1	Determination and specification of group goals. Control and/or comparison groups instigated.		
2	Screening of group members.		
	Pretesting: Biographical and subjective expectational scales; self-report measures; behavioral and psychophysiological measures; other reports on Ss; other self-reports.		
3	Including: Ss; independent observers, spouses or nominated observers.		
4	Groups occur Length, time, settings determined or manipulated	Irrelevant experience, i.e., discussion group, cognitive group	No group experience
5	Posttesting: Same as pretesting plus subjective materials elicited and assessment of demand characteristics made by interview		
6	3 - 6 month follow-up.	Same as posttesting.	
7	1 - 3 year follow-up.	Same as posttesting.	
8	Nothing	Nothing	Waiting list offered group experience

References

Bowers, K. S. The effects of demands for honesty on reports of visual and auditory hallucinations. International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 1967, 15, 31-36.

Campbell, J. P., & Dunnette, M.D. Effectiveness of T-group experiences in managerial training and development. Psychological Bulletin, 1968, 70, 73-104.

Cooper, C. L. The influence of the trainer on participant change in T-groups. Human Relations, 1969, 22, 515-530.

Diamond, M. J. Encounter groups and behavior change: Toward a social learning approach. Paper presented at the 80th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, September, 1972.

Diamond, M. J., & Shapiro, J. L. An expedient model of encounter group learning. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, New Orleans, April, 1973.

Gibb, J. R. Effects of human relations training. In A. E. Bergin & S. L. Garfield's (Eds.) Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change. New York: Wiley, 1971, 839-862.

Gottschalk, L. A., & Davidson, R. S. Sensitivity groups, encounter groups, training groups, marathon groups, and the laboratory movement. In H. I. Kaplan & B. J. Sadock's (Eds.), Comprehensive Group Psychotherapy. Baltimore, Maryland: Williams & Wilkins, 1971, 422-459.

Harrison, R. Problems in the design and interpretation of research on human relations training. Explorations in Human Relations Training and Research, 1967, Report No. 1, 1-9. NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science.

House, R. J. T-group education and leadership effectiveness: A review of the empiric literature and a critical evaluation. Personnel Psychology, 1967, 20, 1-32.

Lakin, M. Interpersonal Encounter: Theory and Practice in Sensitivity Training. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

Reddy, W. B. Screening and selection of participants. In L. H. Solomon and B. Berzon's (Eds.) New Perspectives on Encounter Groups. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972, 53-67.

Shapiro, J. L., & Diamond, M. J. Increases in hypnotizability as a function of encounter group training: Some confirming evidence. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 1972, 79, 112-115.

Shapiro, J. L., & Diamond, M. J. Toward the long-term scientific study of encounter group phenomena: II. Empirical findings. Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Anaheim, California, April, 1973.

Stock, D. A. Survey of research on T-groups. In L. P. Bradford, J. R. Gibb, K. D. Benne's (Eds.) T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method: Innovation in Re-education. New York: Wiley, 1964, 395-441.

Footnotes

[1]Paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Anaheim, California, April, 1973. The authors wish to express their gratitude to Jonathan Wares and Kenneth Willinger for their constructive advice on this manuscript.
Reprints may be obtained from Michael Jay Diamond, Department of Psychology, University of Hawaii, 2430 Campus Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

[2]A screening questionnaire has been constructed for this purpose and is available from the first author upon request.

[3]The authors recognize the ethical question involved in withholding treatment for such an extensive period of time. However, it must be recognized that the current model strives for ideal methodological purity and may have to be sacrificed for ethical or practical considerations.